47th Anniversary of Medicare and Medicaid

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In 1965, Congress made the bold decision to fundamentally change our health care system by passing into law legislation that would implement the Medicare and Medicaid programs. In the intervening 47 years, millions of Americans have received peace of mind and stability in their healthcare.

This week marks the 47th Anniversary of these programs and showcases the vital steps forward we have taken in improving the health of our nation. Before the program was introduced, more than half of senior citizens did not have health insurance and 25% of beneficiaries lived in poverty. Additionally, millions of children were born in the United States without proper coverage and did not have the resources to get the care they needed. Today, more than 47 million seniors and disabled people receive benefits through the Medicare system and 31 million children receive benefits through the Medicaid system.

Despite the good it does, as we reach this anniversary, the Medicare program is under attack. Congressional Republicans, led by House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan, have proposed a budget plan that cuts Medicare nearly in half, functionally ending the guaranteed-benefit nature of the program and turning it into a "voucher" scheme that lags behind rising medical costs and puts consumers at the mercy of private insurance companies. Changes must be made to both systems to keep up with the burgeoning cost of health care, but they can be done smartly, without ending the programs as we know them.

I believe Medicare and Medicaid are two of our government's most important services and, as your Congressman, I will continue to fight to ensure that these programs are continued and expanded. The programs impact everyone; they support those without access and promote jobs in the health sector. On this 47th anniversary, I am reminded of how Medicare and Medicaid have affected the lives of so many members of the community, and I vow to continue to support programs that increase Americans' access to quality, affordable health coverage